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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Single stream recycling has arrived – with some hiccups

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Except for some “inappropriate and even alarming” dumping in their new Cherry Street bins and two weeks’ delay due to weather, Recycling for Newaygo County’s (RNC) conversion to single stream recycling at its eight collection sites is unfolding “fairly smoothly”, reports Executive Director Linda Ritz White.

The new Cherry Street Single Stream Collection Site at 35 E. Cherry St. in Fremont has been up and running since mid-December. The Collection Sites at the Croton Transfer Station, Grant, Newaygo, and White Cloud were completed this week, and it is expected Garfield Township, Hesperia, and Holton will be converted by the end of this week or at the latest, Monday.



RNC has contracted with Cart-Right LLC to haul recyclables. Pictured are owners Mark Ramsey and Lola Harmon-Ramsey

RNC has contracted with Cart-Right LLC to haul materials to Kent County Recycling, an automated materials recovery facility in Grand Rapids, where recyclables are separated and shipped out to users. View a video of what happens to recyclables at Kent County and beyond, at recyclekent.org/videos.htm.



From left, City of Fremont Supervisor Todd Blake joined Board Member David White, Executive Director Linda Ritz White, and Plant Manager Scott Grant to “cut the ribbon” as the first RNC single stream site is introduced at 35 East Cherry Street, Fremont.

Cart-Right has serviced Fremont's curbside recycling program since 2007.

The City of Fremont signed a land lease with RNC in November allowing the recycler to set up the new Fremont collection site on a small city-owned strip on Cherry Street, just west of the existing processing plant.

Service at each site will be assessed and adjusted based on use. Currently, the pickup schedule at Cherry Street is Mondays and Thursdays.

RNC launched Cherry Street first as a test site because staff are still at the processing plant next door through January 31, and can monitor and quickly address problems, Ritz White explained.

She said one of RNC's biggest concerns, inappropriate use of the bins, i.e. the dumping of garbage and other unacceptable items, has in fact reared its head.

While most users have been respectful as they figure out the new system, some have taken "ridiculous" liberties, said the director. RNC staff, the hauler, or both have pulled things out at Cherry Street — for example an arm chair, a shelving unit, Christmas lights, an ironing board, dishes, paint that spilled over everything, even a toilet and so on — before or during most dumps.



A can of paint dumped into a recycle bin has contaminated and rendered all materials unusable.

"Last week our hauler pulled out excessive trash, plastic sheeting, and even a disassembled dryer. We ask that residents and users keep an eye open and report illegal dumping to police or to RNC at 231.924.5822."

Ritz White pointed out that not only does RNC have to deal with these items, the nonprofit has to pay to landfill them.

"We could go broke just on garbage disposal while trying to keep the sites alive. We ask people to be respectful and deal with their own non-recyclables. That is not RNC's purpose, and not how our contributors expect us to spend their dollars.

"If this is going on while we're still a presence there, I am very concerned what will happen after we leave the Cherry Street plant. We can't afford to be there daily to clean up these messes, yet we certainly can't leave them. The City of Fremont won't put up with dumping on its property and could rescind our land lease. Kent County Recycling will also turn us away if our hauler shows up with 'dirty' loads.

“Due to our distance from any other materials recovery facilities, our options are limited. We don’t want to mess this up! I want to impress on users the severity of this problem. If it continues, we will get shut down or sadly have no choice but to shut down the Fremont site!”

In an effort to reduce the problem, RNC is retrofitting all the bins with chains limiting the height to which the lids may be opened. Ritz White said there is still ample space to empty in the contents of a large bag of unsorted recyclables. See below for details about how to use the new single stream sites.

Except for the few users abusing the unmanned collection site, community support for the conversion has been outstanding, said Ritz White. There have been many calls and notes of support, and questions by users wanting to follow the correct new procedures, but few complaints.

Ritz White noted that winter couldn’t be a worse time for this type of conversion, but moving forward quickly was prudent to “curb the bleeding. We’re spending thousands more than necessary every month we continue to process the materials ourselves.”



The guys at Jerry’s Towing in Fremont help unload RNC’s new recycling bins. Owner Keith Baker and staff have been the nonprofit’s strongest supporter as it converts its eight drop sites to single stream recycling, moving bins around and providing use of their heated garage for labeling and retrofitting the containers.”

Fortunately, RNC found a “foul weather friend” in Keith Baker and his staff at Jerry’s Towing, who opened up their heated garage in Fremont to the organization to work in. Unfortunately, the new bins were delivered just as the last storm hit, and the garage quickly filled with wrecks. With the improved weather, the labeling and retrofitting are now moving full steam ahead.

Additional support has come from Bruce Saum from Bruce’s Glass, who donated his time to repair windows before RNC leaves its leased Cherry Street home of the past 10 years. And Rick’s Trucking and Excavating reduced their price for aggregate work at the New Cherry Street Collection Site.

“The folks at Brooks Township, from whom we are leasing our new home base, have been tremendously supportive. The RNC Board and I are looking forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship.”

A particular boon to RNC’s efforts was a sizeable donation by local philanthropist Margaret (Peggy) Stone to cover the purchase of 18 single stream bins. This

enabled RNC to order all the bins needed immediately for the conversion, and get them quickly into service.

The plan before Stone's donation was to purchase and install the bins a few at a time as funds are raised through the sale of redundant processing equipment, said Ritz White. She estimated the conversion would likely not have been complete until March or even April, and would have been much costlier due to the need to sustain the processing plant until the last site is converted.

"Now the earnings from the sale of equipment can serve as a bit of a cushion in this, our transition year. All the Board and staff are humbled and grateful to this wonderful angel."

The director also expressed thanks to the RNC Board of Directors, several of whom have been hands on "running errands, labeling, installing, moving, whatever it takes."



While the single stream conversion is the recycler's most immediate and visible change, RNC is working on a spectrum of other changes and additions to its services.

Since it no longer needs a plant to sort and process materials, the company will be moving February 1 to a more suitable location for its new operation. The NEW RECYCLING CENTER will be at 490 Quarterline Road in Newaygo. The center will be open to the public Tuesdays and Thursdays Noon to 5 pm, and Wednesdays Noon to 7 pm. Ritz White says the company hopes to expand its public hours through the help of volunteers. Over the next year, the recycler will develop the center to serve a myriad of purposes:

RNC Executive Director Linda Ritz White takes advantage of the mild weekend weather to touch up the new recycling containers, which were down to bare metal in places due to shipping. She explained the primer helps prevent rust.

- Regional Recycling Center: A place for Members, Friends of Recycling, and paying guests to bring difficult to recycle items including polystyrene, electronics, CFL bulbs, batteries, etc.; also a place to drop off large quantities of cardboard or paper to avoid the

limits of the Single Stream bins or RNC's requisite pickup charges; it's also the place to go to shred your sensitive documents. RNC will continue offering trash disposal service as well at the new center.

- RNC's Business Base of Operations: Here the bailing and storing takes place prior to shipping of bales of cardboard and paper collected as part of RNC's pickup service and from deliveries to the Recycling Center.
- RNC's Corporate Office: The home of administrative operations.
- Recycling Education Center: The nonprofit plans to construct and house a display teaching about recycling, and a teaching area where local groups of all ages will be invited to participate in educational programming. Ritz White says the goal is to have the Education Center built and operational by the start of the 2015-16 school year. In the meantime, the board's new Education and Advocacy Committee will soon begin working on immediate initiatives including some fun challenges for youths and equally fun ideas for how to celebrate Earth Day this spring. They are looking for helpers. Call the RNC office at 231.924.5822 if you interested.
- Entrepreneurial and Collaboration Center: In the early stages of conceptualization, the idea is to work with and advocate for individuals, groups, and organizations, and to participate in or promote local initiatives supporting the reclamation and re-use of recyclable materials.
- Grounds for Fundraising Events: In the early stages of conceptualization, the Recycling Center grounds will host some of RNC's fundraising activities down the road. "In the meantime, our new Fund Development Committee is also hard at work planning barrels of fun for this spring and fall," said Ritz White. "We have a couple of really fun events in the works, one near Easter, and the other in the early fall. The latter is a corporate challenge like you've never seen in our area. We're really excited." The event planners are also looking for helpers.

RNC's paid cardboard and paper pickup services will continue. However its "at work" program will be eliminated effective the end of January as RNC will no longer have a vehicle capable of hauling trailers. After the move, all business accounts will be assessed individually and possibly re-priced based on RNC's costs to deliver the service.

"Three quarters of our pickups have been free or for a minimal fee during the 10 years RNC has served Newaygo County and bordering communities. The pickup service was a great way to promote recycling in its time, and came closer to paying for itself until a few years ago, when the price of cardboard and paper took a drastic tumble," explained the director.

"I would personally love to collect every slip of paper, every cardboard box, every soup can, every milk jug, for re-use, and save an equal share in our natural resources while encouraging new business from recyclables.

“We have had to face many hard realities this past year. We don’t need to make a profit but we do need to pay the bills. In order to keep the existing drop sites going, we will be billing everyone we service going forward. After our move, we will personally contact each customer to discuss the possibilities. For example, if subscribing to our pickup service is not an option, paper and cardboard in any quantities may be delivered to the New Recycling Center in Newaygo at no charge.”

RNC is also overhauling its Membership and *Friends of Recycling* programs, and has set a goal of doubling those contributions in the coming year, a crucial part of its funding plan, said the director. She noted that at January 1, 2015, RNC has about 250 current members and 100 *Friends of Recycling*, who together contributed about \$20,000 to the nonprofit’s efforts in 2013-14.

“We are serving 3,000-4000 households. We can and should be getting a lot more support from users. Many don’t even know we’re a non-profit, but think we are county operated and funded due to our name. We are going to change that perception.”

The suggested membership contribution to help fund the neighborhood collection sites is \$50/year. However, the director stresses that every dollar helps, and no one will be denied membership due to limited means. Checks with name, address, township, phone, and email address may be mailed to Recycling for Newaygo County, PO Box 217, Fremont MI 49412. Recyclers may alternatively sign up or renew their membership through RNC’s secure online Membership Page at www.recyclingfornewaygocounty.org. The page is being updated to reflect the changes in the program, but still usable in the meantime.

RNC’s *Friends of Recycling* program includes:

- Patrons, \$100-199/year;
- Benefactors, 200+/year; and
- Corporate Sponsors, \$500+/year.

Members and *Friends of Recycling* receive the following membership privileges:

- Use of all RNC collection sites
- 6 shredding sessions annually (up to 1 banker’s box per session)
- 3 bags of garbage disposal (up to 60 gallons each)
- Free recycling of old electronics, household batteries, and other difficult to recycle items
- Up to date information and recycling news
- Board of Directors candidacy and voting privileges
- Your contributions are 100% tax deductible
- The environmental/economic health and beauty of your community.

In addition, Friends of Recycling will be recognized on RNC's online APPLAUSE FOR THE CAUSE "wall", and at designated lifetime giving levels, will receive RNC's prestigious EARTH ALIVE award. Corporate Sponsors contributing \$500-\$1,499 receive optional monthly pickup service. Corporate Sponsors contributing \$1,500+ annually receive optional weekly pickup service and unlimited commercial shredding.

See below for new single stream collection site usage guidelines.

Guidelines: new RNC single stream collection sites

"Please respect your neighborhood drop site and follow the instructions listed below, along with those on the sides of the new single stream recycling bins," asks Linda Ritz White, Executive Director for Recycling for Newaygo County.

The nonprofit recycling company asks that users follow these guidelines, and share them with friends and family.

- All recyclables may be placed together in the same single stream bin. Every bin has descriptions and pictures of acceptable materials. A printable guide for home use is available for download at RNC's website, recyclingfornewaygocounty.org.
- Acceptable materials include:
 - Cardboard/paperboard
 - Mail and office paper
 - Newspapers and magazines
 - 1-7 plastic bottles, tubs, and jugs
 - 2 and 4 plastic bags
 - Metal cans and foil
 - Glass bottles and jars (remove plastic caps and lids).
- Do not include:
 - Trash, furniture or household items, dishes, electronics, or construction materials
 - Polystyrene (Styrofoam)
 - Large plastics without recycling symbol
 - Needles and medical waste
 - Waxed paper containers such as juice boxes
 - Zip-top bags, plastic films, cling wrap, and plastic food bags
 - Wrapping paper and tissue unless marked recyclable
 - Pet food bags.

- Break down cardboard boxes so they do not clog up the bins.
- Do not tie bags — empty into bins.
- Do not overfill bins or stretch the corners of lids beyond the chain length. The purpose of the chain is to 1) keep lids from blowing open on windy days, and 2) limit the size of objects that may be placed in the bins.
- After February 1, bring polystyrene, old electronics, CFL light bulbs, household batteries, and large loads of cardboard and paper to the New Recycling Center, 490 Quarterline Road, Newaygo (Brooks Township site). Public hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from Noon to 5 pm, and Wednesdays Noon to 7 pm.

Recycling for Newaygo County

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